

Kevin's Story - Born Brisbane 1943

Kevin Ronald Schneidewin

Categories

Life summary # *Story-teller's cultural background*: Australian

Urban/Rural # Sport/Recreation/Work # Successes # Triumphs

Coming of age # Travel

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Kevin's Story—Goondiwindi 1966-70

Preamble

I was born **Kevin Ronald Schneidewin** in Brisbane, at the Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital on the 7th of March 1943.



Family Home Kedron



Goondiwindi Home

This was the second world war, my dad was exempt from service due to health and work reasons. I can remember vaguely the practice air raid sirens going off at the top of our street and squadrons of planes flying over, heading off probably to the war. Dad dug an air raid shelter under our front landing, it was just a hole in the ground with some log walls.



I grew up in Kedron and went to Kedron primary followed by Kedron high school. I was a reasonable student and graduated the primary school scholarship exams with a 76% pass. In high school I got 3 A's, 4 B's and 1 C at graduation.

We had a great teacher, and coach of rugby league, at primary school. Our team all grew up together through the weight grades and were hardly ever beaten. Three of us, including me, eventually played rep football for Brisbane and Queensland.



As was the custom in 1958, most people left high school at junior level to look for a job in either insurance, banking or the public service. I applied for all three with insurance winning the race, and I enjoyed a long career in general insurance.

As a young adult my sporting days started without rugby league, I was too small. I took up sailing as a crew member only because I didn't have enough money to own a boat. Over time we attended four Australian championships. I think the best we did was 12th place and we won a Queensland championship.

After that, in the 60's, I took up surfing, as a lot of young lads did. This was until I was sent West with my job. There were no waves out there.

Life in Goondiwindi 1966 to 1970

The Company I worked for specialised in rural insurance. They had special insurance schemes linked to stock and station agents Dalgety's, Elders, and Queensland primary producers. I was sent to Goondiwindi aged 23 as a what was termed, resident inspector. I really was a local sales rep, but did organise claim settlements and other stuff.



GOONDIWINDI TOWN CENTRE 1966

I was single when first sent to Goondiwindi. It was arranged that I move in with 3 other young blokes who occupied Dalgety's staff quarters at the back of their office. It was essentially a two-bedroom flat with the front entrance into the office and the rear entrance onto a service lane behind the main street. I learnt a fair bit about drinking and how to play 500 and how to hate mutton.

The story about mutton happened when the youngest guy in the quarters, who is named *Speed* for short, was sent to the saleyards every couple of weeks to help draft cattle and sheep into pens. This is so they can be sold. Occasionally we would say to *Speed*, *how about you get hold of one of the dealers when they buy some sheep and ask him if we can keep one for a killer*. Of course, we all had envisaged that a nice hogget would be brought home, but not *Speed*. He always picked the biggest, ugliest sheep money could find. A guy called Bob who was the merchandise manager of Dalgety's could kill sheep properly, cut its throat, skin, gut and finally hang it. In exchange for half the sheep Bob did the first part of the job for us, and then we hung the sheep for a couple of days. Then we would saw it in half and give Bob his piece and butcher the rest. I learnt quite a bit about butchery, after a few times, and I can dress a boned shoulder, leg of lamb, loin chops and cutlets. What's left over, like the neck, the flap and the hocks we put into a stew with lots of veggies and slow cooked it. That would feed us for about 3 days. The only trouble was the old mutton is full of fat and when you cooked it you had to dish all the fat off the top, if you are to get to the meat and veggies. When you put it in the fridge after the first feed and you pull it out the next day there is about an inch of fat on top. We would just skim the fat off and heat it up again. By the end of about the fourth day, you're heartily sick of the strong mutton flavour, and you look for a bit of steak to eat.



One of the fun things we did on a Saturday night was to go to the pub and have a few beers. Then we came back to the office and went through the front door into the main office part of the building. Over the road in the post office was a manual telephone exchange with a couple young girls manning the switch board. It was quiet, so we would pick up our phone and they would say, *number please*. We would respond by saying, *that's a nice jumper you've got on tonight, pretty colour that pink*. They would jump up and down and look around, trying to figure out where we got this information. We'd switch the light on in the office and wave to them and they'd wave back. Then we tried to chat them up. One of the things we did was tell jokes. These would go back and forth and the girls would say, hang on a minute, I'll get Darren from Inglewood exchange to join us. So, we tell a joke and Darren would say, we better get Janice from St George. After half an hour on the phone with the girls, half of south-west Queensland hooked in telling dirty jokes. It was a lot of fun and obviously if the government ever knew we would have been in big trouble.



I was asked to join the local Lions Club as the previous Rep was a member and I just replaced him. This was a wonderful opportunity to have instant contact with 40 town folk who could help you with all sorts of things like real estate, mechanics, electrical and whatever. Something that people don't really appreciate is that service clubs do assist with transferring into the community and that's always an issue in country towns. There are the locals, the transferees and the farmers and Graziers. There is three distinct groups and Lions are full of transferees which helps you integrate with the community. I had some wonderful time with those

In October 1966

My fiancé, Glenice and I were married, and we moved into a new flat which was situated next to the Goondiwindi RSL club

Fortunately, the back door of the flat was in line with a window that looked into the RSL club pool room. I could come home from work and go straight to the pool room for a few beers and a game. Glenice, who was cooking dinner, could call out through the window, *come home for dinner*. I would crawl out of the window and into the flat and Bob's your uncle.



Goondiwindi RSL



Cattleyards

After a few days at Goondiwindi Glenice was getting bored. She didn't have a job. At that stage I decided to introduce her to country life and take her out to the cattle saleyards on the edge of town. When we approached the saleyard there was a guy sitting on top of the fence. His name was Bob Hawker, but he had an issue, he couldn't remember names, so he called everyone *Shagger*. He became known as Bob *Shagger* Hawker. As we approached, he said to me, g'day Shagger you're back in town. I said yes, and he replied, I suppose this is the new Mrs Shagger, is it? I told him, this is Glenice. Glenice was horrified, but over the years she got used to him and his sayings and became good friends.

Bob used to have a property on the edge of town where he had Black Angus cattle. He decided to buy three Brahman Angus Cross, to add some size to his Herd and he decided to go with the primaries manager to Dalby to buy them at sale. I was invited along to insure the bulls. Absolutely amazing trip because they were the two of the funniest guys I've ever met in my life. When we got to the yards and we looked at the bulls he wanted they were trying to crawl over the fence like dogs and the fence was eight feet high and they weighed a ton at least. I was a bit worried about insuring these things and when he got them home and put them in the house paddock they promptly disappeared. He rang me to tell me, and I thought Jesus, \$10,000 worth of bull claim coming up anytime soon. Shortly after they disappeared he was getting phone calls from his neighbours saying, get these big black mongrel bulls out of my Cows or I'll shoot em. We got them all back but he had to put them in a special yard. I assume he got his money's worth in the end.



Shagger also had a flock of sheep and I had mentioned to him at one stage that I had not seen lamb marking in the old style. Lamb marking is the act of cutting the testicles off young rams to make them into wether's so they produce better wool. In modern times they put a rubber band around the sack and they just drop off but the old times they had a knife and they would put the RAM in a cradle, grab hold of the bag and split it open. The testes would pop out and they would grab them in their mouth, pull them off and spit them out. Hard to believe but there were people who specialised in that and I'll never forget the site of this old guy with knife in hand, blood all over his face and prickles in his lips doing hundreds of these operations.

Bob Shagger Hawker was a member of my Lions Club. One evening he helped me with a problem. Like everyone else in Goondiwindi I parked my car with the windows down and keys in the ignition. While I was at a Lions meeting, my wife drove downtown to get some pills from the chemist and saw three lads sitting on my car and thought they were a bit cheeky. Anyway, it appears that they decided to steal the car and drove off heading for Brisbane. On the way out of town a fire engine, police and ambulance went roaring past, sirens going, because there was a fire at the motel on the edge of town. At this stage the young lads realised there wasn't much petrol in the car. With so much happening up the road they turned around and dumped the car in town.

Some hours later the police pulled them up because they looked suspicious and said *did you pinch a car*, and they said *yes*. I got a policeman at my front door at 3 in the morning saying we found your car. I'm sure they did it to get square. I then had to, with great trepidation, ring the boss in Toowoomba to tell him that my car had been stolen but I had recovered it and there was no damage. When I rang, he wasn't there, thank goodness, so they put me onto an old Rep who was the second in charge and I told him the story. He said don't worry about it, I'll tell the boss. I expected to cop a blast but I never heard, so I assume my dear old mate decided it was safer for me if the boss did not know.



Bob Smith was the merchandise manager for Dalgety's, he was also a Lion's Club member, and after I bought a house in Baker Street, Goondiwindi he turned out to be a close neighbour. His house was only two doors down the road from mine. We became good mates and still are.



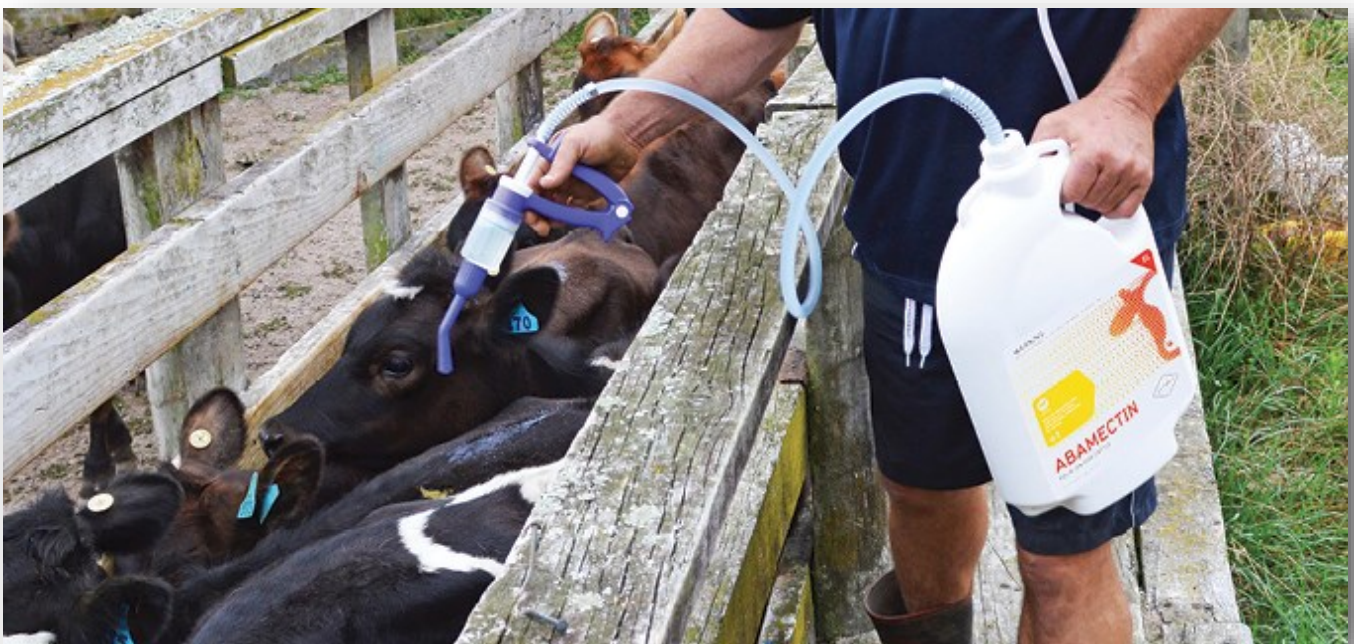
Bob Smith and Glenice Schneidewin

He was a stocky bloke, a good salesman, and we got up to no good whenever possible. On Sunday mornings he would often yell across the backyards of the house next door and say, *hey Kevin I'm going to the dump, do you want to dump some stuff*. This of course was code for after the dump we'll go to a session at the pub. Our wives were a wakeup but that didn't seem to stop us.

One of my jobs was to attend stud stock sales with a view to insuring bulls or rams for the large amounts of money people had paid for them. In this case it was a big sale out at North Star on the wheat plains and we did quite a lot of business on the day. As usual the stud owner put on nibbles and drinks. It was Bob's job to bring an 18-gallon keg and temprite system with gas bottles out to the sale. This sale was in the middle of winter and was bitterly cold, so everyone had one beer and went home. I had arranged to drive home with Bob. Here we were with his ute and an 18 gallon keg setup in the back with two beer guns. We put the guns through the windows of the ute and started to drive the 40 or 50 miles back to town, pouring ourselves a beer as required. Arriving home, we hid the keg amongst a heap of hay bales and continued to consume it for some days afterwards. Unfortunately, Bob is a generous bloke and kept inviting more and more people for free beer, so I didn't last as long.

When things were quiet Bob and I would select a road to drive up and call on all our mutual clients to canvas business. At one stage there was a new cattle drench method invented which was a bag of drench with a pipe attached and a handgun with a needle on the end. The idea was you put some cattle in a race and when you have them in place you grab the flesh on their shoulder, jab the needle in and squeeze the trigger. They had no worms for six months.

To demonstrate the process, half a dozen cattle were put in a pen. They are very skittish and would not cooperate. We tried to ram them through the race to inject them, but they kept moving around. Bob duly grabbed this old cow by the tail and gave it a good twist and shoved until it's head hit the end of the race. I immediately struck the needle in and squeezed which gave the cow a bit of a fright. It promptly pooped big heaps of slimy green dung all over Bob's right-hand side. We had to hose him off to get him clean enough to drive home. He was not a happy chappy.



Fishing is an extremely popular undertaking in Goondiwindi. There is a big Murray cod and a yellowbelly in the river and most of the locals have a boat of some description. Bob decided it was easier to catch fish in a fish trap, so we made this massive trap out of weldmesh. I helped him sneak out and put it in the river one night. Unfortunately, we caught only one yellowbelly and about six turtles. The poor old turtles would swim into the trap but couldn't find their way out and would drown. They could not breathe. Discretion was the better part of valour and we decided to dispense with the trap before we killed all the turtles in the river.



At another time Bob got his hands on a gill net which was about 25 metres long with floats on the top and lead weights on the bottom. We took it to a very quiet part of the river and tied the net to a tree that was lying on the edge of the bank. We let it trail out in the current with the idea being fish would come along and swim into the net and get caught. After a couple of days we borrowed a boat and took a carton and went out to see what we could retrieve. It was decided we would pull the boat up and down the net to recover anything that was caught. We had drunk half the carton by the time we got in the boat. We ran the net and found nothing. There was a tree which we were using as a sort of wharf, and Bob being a bit of a klutz stood up with one foot on the log and one foot in the boat did the classic splits and we went A over T. The boat capsized and we both went under. I came up missing my sunglasses, losing my thongs and with a stubby full of river water. Bob came up with his finger on the bridge of his glasses and his thumb over his stubby. It's beyond me how he had the presence of mind in that split second to save his beer, but he sure did.



There was a traditional boys fishing trip at Easter where a group of guys would go out to the common, set up camp, and set out a heap of fishing lines, tying them to trees. The guys would then sit around and have a few beers. We always took a couple of young teenagers along to run the lines so no one needed to bother themselves with real fishing. One of the guys just snored something terrible, to the point where no one could get to sleep. When he was out cold one night they snuck over and grabbed his stretcher and carried it out onto a sand-

bank in the middle of the river and left in there until morning. We were all sound asleep when, all of a sudden, this guy started screaming that he was in the water and about to drown. We assured him he could walk out but he didn't like it very much. He didn't talk to us for a week after which he packed up and went home.

One of the jobs Bob and I liked was to run the Tote at the picnic races. We used to get paid \$25 and it wasn't difficult to do. At one race meeting we worked, there was something about race 3. It was only a four-horse race and somehow the word got out that a certain horse was a dead set certainty to win. Everyone who bet at The Tote bet on the same horse. In a four-horse race you only pay the winner, no places. What happens with the totes is the government takes 10% off the top of the money bet and then when the winners, seconds and thirds are declared you calculate the winning payouts and what is left goes to the race club. If everyone is a winner, the whole pool gets paid out, less the governments tax. For a 50 cent bet you take \$0.05 tax and you can only pay them back \$0.45. After the race, when we opened the Tote window and started paying \$0.45 all hell broke loose. The trouble was most of the punters that used the tote were women and kids, highly illegal but that's what happened anyway. The noise drew the attention of the old sergeant who came over and said, what's going on here. We had to pull the shutter down, take him into the back of the tote and explain in words of one syllable how the system worked, and convince him that what we were doing was honest. So, we open the shutter and the sarge announces we were doing the right thing according to the law, you shouldn't be betting here anyway, and off he went. Needless to say, the turnover of The Tote for the rest of the races on that day was very small.



On another occasion we were asked to run the Tote at the Talwood picnic races. Talwood is a small town 60 miles west of Goondiwindi on a dirt road. We did our job and it was a nice day. Afterwards, we were invited back to the Talwood Station homestead for a garden party with the officials and special guests, which was rather nice. We partook of copious amounts of food and grog. When we decided to go home, quite late in the evening, one of our good clients asked if we would like to stop at his place for a nightcap. We thought that was a great idea, so we said goodbye to all the people, got in the ute and off we went. It's pitch

black on the road at night time, no street lights, and we're looking for his turn off and couldn't find it. We took off on a track which we thought was his. We ended up driving across country, around trees and stumps until we came to a fence on the railway line which in turn, helped us find his proper track. Anyway, we drove in and there were lights on everywhere in the house, so we went up the stairs and across the veranda into his living room and called out, we got no answer. We figured we must have beaten him back from the garden party. Oh well, as Bob Smith usually did, he raided the fridge. He rummaged through the contents and found a couple of beers. We were standing around having a bit of a chat when our friend finally turned up with his wife. *You beat us home?* His wife said, *how are the kids?* With horrified looks on our faces we asked, *what kids?* *They have been here all afternoon says mum, you haven't seen them?* She went searching for them and found them under the bed. They were absolutely scared out of their wits by these too drunken yobbos stamping through their house raiding their fridge. Mother wasn't very happy, so Bob and I beat a hasty retreat and went home.



Country police are a breed of their own, particularly the long-serving ones. They know their place in the town society and turn a blind eye to a lot of things for the sake of peace and harmony. For instance, the Lions Club would meet as well as Rotary and Apex every couple of weeks, and after the meeting the boys would have a few beers at the bar. At 10 to 10 the old Goondiwindi sergeant would send around a couple of his underlings to say, okay, you have 10 minutes to get home. We all knew if you don't go home when told they would come back and book us for drinking.

Now, the young police guys that were transferred straight from the Academy had a different view of life. They needed to understand country people. There was one particular guy, he rode a police motorcycle and would come out to the gliding club from time to time. He would be given free flights, but after he finished would sit outside the front gate and wait for us to leave. His idea was to charge people with having too much to drink. We were smart enough to realise when he was there, so we wouldn't leave until he was gone.



I spent many months teaching my wife Glenice to drive and when I felt she was ready I made an appointment with the Sergeant for a test. He said, *I'll send our young motorcycle guy to test her, she will be right anyway. I have seen her around town doing OK.* This smart young cop made Glenice reverse the full length of the service lane behind the main street. It was very narrow and full of obstacles, and Glenice got very nervous. She lost the plot, so he took her back and failed her. Glenice came home crying and I asked what the matter was. She said, *I've failed my driving test.* I said, *that's not right*, so I rang the Sergeant and complained. He said, *send her down here*, and promptly gave her a licence. I assume the young cop got a red butt.



He also used to harass the cattle truck drivers. They were a pretty tough mob and one guy was driving along the road, he just finished unloading and he noticed this young police guy following him on his motorbike. He was careful to keep under 100 km/h because he would normally do 120km/h. This cop stuck behind him and quite close. So

to get square he jammed on the truck brakes. The young cop went under the back of the truck, fell off his bike, scraped his arms and legs and bent the bike. The cattle truck driver pulled up and went over and said, *I'm sorry mate, I had to stop, there was a kangaroo in front of me.* This cop was not happy, but the driver said he would put the bike on the truck and take him back to town. When they got to the main street in town, with the bent motorbike on the back, they drove the whole length of the main strip blasting the horn. Everyone came out to have a look and they started laughing. That young cop got square with the truck driver later and threw the book at him for a whole heap of offences. That's the way it was.

Part of my territory involved travelling to the tiny town of Dirranbandi. Once a month I would drive over dirt roads for 153 miles. They were quiet roads so I would try to get there as quickly as I could. If it was possible for me to drive a mile a minute, I could get to Dirranbandi in 153 minutes. This required me to cruise at 70 miles per hour to get the average up to 60 mile per hour. I did this regularly, fun at 23 but stupid in retrospect.

On the trip out I would need to travel through the little villages of Talwood, Thallon, Noondoo Siding, and then Dirranbandi. Every Monday morning when I got to Noondoo Siding a train would be pulled up at the station with the engine across the level crossing. I had to go over. Of course, the driver and his offsider were having smoko in the cabin, so they would slowly prepare their cuppa and look at me smugly whilst holding me up. Once the train left I could finally cross and be on my way to Dirranbandi. I needed to drive quickly to beat the train to the last level crossing before town. This was probably fool hardy, but it's a game you played.



DIRRANBANDI



RAILWAY STATION

As I was driving towards Thallon the road made a right angle turn when it came to the railway line. I put my foot on the brake and it felt funny like it was going to fade, so I coasted to the level crossing. I put my foot on the brake again and found I had none. Luckily, going off straight ahead, was a small track and I managed to stop the vehicle with the handbrake. I drove into town to a mechanic and found that the brake line had been rubbing up and down on an axle bracket and had worn right through. It was fixed with a bit of brazing, but I was quite upset at the time because I could have gone straight out through the railway line and not be here now.

The pastoral agents and banks in Dirranbandi were similar to Goondiwindi. The back of their shops were quarters where staff members lived, and it was quite common for all of them to mix together, have a few drinks at the hotel, and when told, go home to one of their quarters and play cards until all hours. On one particular night, when I was there, they went to the national bank and were playing cards. The door into the bank was wide open and the back door of the quarters was also wide open, and in full view was a big safe. I asked one of the Bank guys, aren't you a bit scared to be sitting here with that big safe filled with money and in full view? He said no, not at all, we have a gun. He went and got this small pistol, a 38 I think, and said, if anyone tried to rob us we just aim and fire. With that said he picked up the gun pointed it through the doorway into the bank, pulled the trigger and it went off. Everyone scattered and ran for their life. The bullet had travelled through the bank, out the front glass window and into the shop over the road. The next morning the police sergeant was not pleased, the bank guys got a real rousing, but they had a bit of a giggle afterwards.

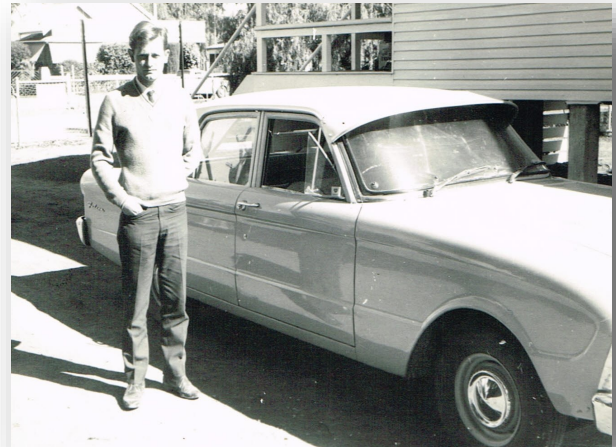


DIRRANBANDI



The sergeant in Dirranbandi hated the place. He transferred in from Birdsville where he was not only the police officer but also the stock agent, the public trustee and anything else the government would give him. He would have a good bludge and make good money but once he got to Dirranbandi he had to contend with a greater population. He couldn't handle the big smoke, he said. It's only a tiny town of about 500 people but to him it was a huge responsibility. In due course he gave me quite a few insurance tips and I made some good money from that. His reasoning was the Suncorp guy, who he was agent for, never turned up in town and I did, so I deserved to get the business. He really wasn't a bad guy. If he were in the pub until midnight you could stay, but, when he left so did you!

On one trip to Dirranbandi a client wanted a review of his insurances, he lived not very far from Lightning Ridge. I arranged to visit him on a certain day so I asked the pastoral agent for Primaries if he'd like to come for the drive, and he said he would. He asked if he could bring his wife because she was friendly with the client's wife. That was not a problem, but when I went to pick them up to take them on the trip, I found his wife was 9 1/2 months pregnant. I commented that the road would be rough, but he assured me she would be okay. The baby wasn't due for a week or so. We set off with our directions to turn off at a white gate at a certain distance. In the country directions tend to be very unreliable. We drove for far longer than I thought we should, and I'm thinking we must have missed the turn off. We were about to do a U-turn when we saw a guy walking along the road. This is somewhere between Hebel and Lightning Ridge, nearly desert country.



To think I came across a fellow walking along this road is almost implausible. We pulled up and asked him if he knew where my client's property was, did he know it? He tells me, yes, you've missed the turn off but he said this bore drain here that you see, if you follow that it goes right past their back door. I told him, mate, this is a falcon I'm driving. That's not a problem, it's all claypan, you only have to cross the drain twice, all you need is a good run up at it and you'll get through it okay. It turned out the reason this guy knew so much about the drain was because he was a bore drain delver. Their job was to drag a special blade (delver) using a horse with the aim of keeping the open bore drains clear of weed and blockages. These open drains are now mostly piped to save evaporation. With trepidation I set off cross-country with the Falcon and my agents' pregnant wife. Whenever we crossed the drain I made her get out, and I drove the car through by myself, and then helped her back in.



We finally got to the client's place, but he was a bit upset that we were late. He had a couple hundred sheep in his home paddock and had to drive them through two other paddocks. We offered to help him. He drove his motorcycle with his dogs following, and we drove a Mini Moke. It was a lot of fun rounding up sheep. Anyway, we did the business and he insisted we had to stay for dinner because it's so late. By the time we left it was dark and he said here is the track you've got to follow. Drive in that direction until you eventually see a light. That light is the neighbour's house and I will make sure he keeps it on for you. When you get to his house just drive along his fence to the left until you come to the road and away you go. We did this and found the track to his house was across a claypan and the wheel marks were probably 100 metres wide. It was a bit hard to tell whether you were on it or not. Anyway, we found our way in pitch darkness and beautiful starlight, safely to the road. Near Dirranbandi we came to a floodway and I pulled up because there was water in it. My primaries friend said there's a flood coming. We drove through that water anyway and got to town. I was really pleased because that lady was very pregnant. She had the baby 2 days later.

Another time I was driving out to a property and noticed about 10 kangaroos hopping along the fence on the side of the road. I thought to myself, if I get ahead of them and get the rifle out I might be able to shoot them as they go past. As I came to a bend in the road I pulled up. As they hopped across the road, I fired shots, and missed every single one. I got back in the car and proceeded on and when I went round the bend I saw a quite substantial Main Roads camp, caravans and all sorts of things and thought holy cow I've just shot 10 bullets through that area. Luckily all of the occupants were out on the road working. I met them down the road a bit fixing up culverts, I waved and sweetly drove past, thank God I didn't kill someone. I did manage to shoot a kangaroo on one of these trips and didn't kill it outright, so I had to go and finish it off. When that was all done and dusted, I thought to myself what a waste. I never tried to shoot another kangaroo ever again.



The Dirranbandi Show Society used to run mud races once a year which involved old jalopies driving through water holes, drag races, and a whole lot of other novelty events. One Saturday afternoon we drove from Goondiwindi to the mud races which was 153 miles. We saw the festivities and drove home, another 153 miles. In the far west distance really means nothing, and entertainment is scarce, so you travel a long way.

When it rained in Dirranbandi the only way I could get home was to travel on a better gravel road to Mungindi on the New South Wales border then drive along the better New South Wales Roads to Boomi and Goondiwindi. On one particular trip the magistrate from Goondiwindi was in Dirranbandi hearing cases. Both he and his clerk were required to travel by train from Goondiwindi to Dirranbandi and reverse. As it was raining on the Friday, the return day, he asked if I could take him home. I said no trouble, then a forestry ranger in town with a utility said he had to go back as well. We decided to travel in tandem for safety. The clerk went in the ute and the magistrate came with me. Heading down towards Mungindi I noticed my fuel gauge was going down very fast and I discovered fuel pouring out of the petrol filter. I had the car serviced in Dirranbandi, which I like to do to leave some money in the town, but the idiot who put the new filter on had broken the seal. The Forestry guy had a lot of stuff in the back of his ute so we tried to fashion the seal out of cardboard, that didn't work. We found a rubber ring from his wife's preservative kit which fitted like a glove, so we put the thing together and drove to Mungindi. I couldn't buy another seal there, so we just left it as is. We filled the car up with fuel, had a feed at the pub, and, with the magistrate's permission, one beer. We then drove home to Goondiwindi. The magistrate asked where I lived, and I said next to the RSL. He then said, *how about I meet you at the RSL at 5 and we'll have a few drinks*. I said, that sounds good to me. He was a really nice guy but super careful about drinking and driving. He was straight up the middle sort of a guy.



One of my better clients was very well to do with a beautiful homestead. He had a Cessna aeroplane and drove lovely cars. He required a review every year, and when I went there, we sat at a big cedar table, beautiful silverware and a cold mutton and salad lunch. He asked if I would visit his son on a neighbouring property, he needed to have his insurance reviewed as well. When I finished his work he directed me to follow a track along a nearby fence until I came to his son's place about 20 miles away. The road was as rough as hell but I managed to get over there and meet the son. We were talking small talk, out the front of his house, when this aeroplane came over and landed. It was the old man, he didn't want to drive across so, he flew. I was stuck with a rough as guts trip and he had the time his life in his aeroplane.

On another occasion I was asked to review insurance for a client who owned Cubbie Station. This was before it was sold and fully developed. This fellow realised that the flat country that he owned was suitable for a flood irrigation system and set one up on his own, which was about 1000 acres of productive country. He had this channel, probably 3 kilometres long, and about 10 m wide with 2 m of water in it. He used to fill that from the river for the irrigation of his paddocks. On weekends they would drive a ute up on to the bank of the drain with a ski rope attached and water ski the full length of the channel. Back in the day this guy was a visionary. Today of course, Cubbie Station is probably the biggest irrigated cotton farm in the world. It was his idea, and I don't know whether he made money when he sold, but he was the pioneer.



Gliding was a sport in Goondiwindi and not for the faint hearted. It was started by a well-to-do grazier who came from the Talwood area who was working in Victoria managing properties whilst his father was still running the family farm. His father died and he and his brother inherited the whole place. He came back to Queensland to look after his share of the property. While he was in Victoria, he learnt how to fly gliders and on coming back to Goondiwindi he decided to start a club. I was one of the original members and we found an airstrip on a property about 8 miles

from town. This was not long enough for gliding, but the owner of the property allowed us to cut a big hole in a fence and gain more length. We made what's called a suspension fence or a Bogan Gate. One of our original members was an old spitfire pilot and the Shire engineer so he kindly diverted a grader onto the strip and instead of being half a mile it became about a mile and a half long. We would use the very economical method of launching gliders by towing them behind a motor car. We had two Ford Customlines which we cut the roof off and put a ski pole on each. To launch, we used 1800ft of high tensile fencing wire attached to the car and a small parachute at the other end which was attached to the aircraft. When it was time to take off the pilot in the aircraft would indicate that he was ready, and the wire was then tensioned by instructing the tow car drivers to move forward slowly by wagging the wings of the glider. When the wing stopped wagging it meant that the wire was tight, and the car could drive off at speed. This allowed the glider to take off in less than 25 m and it would soar skyward like a kite on the end of a piece of string. It was critical to keep the speed under 55 miles per hour so the wing would not break off. Fellows in the car had to keep an eye on the glider to make sure it wasn't going too fast. In those days there were no radios in gliders so if you wanted the car to go faster the pilot waded his wings, and if he wanted the car to go slower he waded his tail. It was all done by signals from the glider. When the aircraft got up to say 1100/1200 feet it was at the end of the wire. In some cases, the pilot would lift the back of the car off the ground to gain maximum height. At that point, the pilot would pull a lever in the glider and let the parachute go. If the pilot was a bit tardy the car drivers would just stop so you have to let it go anyway. Because the tow rope was high tensile fencing wire, if it was allowed to drop straight down it would just pileup in a big bundle. So immediately the parachute was released the car raced off at flat chat to the end of the strip in order to lay the wire straight along the strip. Occasionally a kink would develop and wasn't usually detected until the wire was towed back to the launching point. On the next launch the wire would be tensioned up then it would break as soon as the car sped up. We would then tie a figure eight knot at the break and carry on. When there were numerous figure eights in the wire we would string it along a fence and use a new bit and start the process all over again.

Gliding was a great sport, it was three-dimensional, and I loved to do aerobatics. It was like riding a giant roller coaster. I finally qualified for a licence after about 40 launches, which wasn't too bad. We even competed in the Queensland Championships at one stage and I was navigator when we came in first on the first day which was a real thrill. It was hard to imagine that a motorless aeroplane could fly a 180-mile triangle and not hit the ground. Over the championships a good number of aircraft were landed in paddocks, including ours, but our pilot was extremely skilled, and it was a pleasure to fly with him. Our methods of launching gliders was very basic, however, when I left Goondiwindi and investigated gliding in the Toowoomba area, I found that they used mechanical winches for the same result but charged twice as much. They also had aero tows which were about 10 times the cost of the Goondiwindi launches so it didn't take me long to realise I couldn't afford the sport in the Darling Downs area, so I gave it away.



On one flight I was solo in our high-performance aircraft and had gained height to about 4000 feet. I was very content to just stooze about and look at the countryside. Suddenly I heard a loud screeching noise and immediately thought something had gone wrong with the aircraft. I searched all the instruments and looked around but couldn't see anything wrong, I then noticed a massive wedge tail eagle was riding on the top of my wing in the low-pressure area. He was looking at me with a very menacing stare and I tried to get him off my wing by jiggling my joystick a few times. He just stayed there and complained bitterly. In the end I had to really put the nose down and dived away at high speed to get rid of the thing, it was a unique experience.

On the rare occasions that it rained in that part of the world all the roads that were unsealed became impassable. The idea was you just didn't leave town when it rained unless of course you were out somewhere, and it rained, and you had to get back. While the roads were undriveable it was a fun thing to drive to the outskirts of town where there was a big clay pan. You would drive down the bitumen at high speed, turn hard right on the clay pan and see how many times you could spin the car 180 degrees. I never managed more than two.

After some days of rain on a Dirranbandi trip I headed for home on a reasonably safe gravel road to Mungindi, but I also had a job to do on a side road from Mungindi up towards Talwood. I stopped at the Dalgety office in Mungindi and asked if they thought the road I needed to travel on would be safe. It was black soil and they said they were not really sure. There had been a fair bit of rain when they saw a car go past, driven by a client from up that road. As we watched his very muddy car drive past they said, well you know if he got into town you should be able to get out, so off I go. I got to a big bend in the road a few miles out and promptly slid off into the table drain. When I first got out of the car, I noticed the other guys wheel tracks had done the same thing, and my car was boiling. I'm filling the radiator with my shaving bag from a puddle full of water. I then realised that there were four guys in his car and I was by myself. Obviously, those four guys pushed the car back up onto the top of the road and drove on, and that was a lesson I learnt very quickly.



MUNGINDI TOWN CENTRE & COURT HOUSE

Another time I was driving down a red soil road at high speed and something made me feel very uneasy. For a while I could not figure out what it was. Suddenly I realised there was no plume of dust behind me which meant the road was wet. It didn't look wet but it was, and here I was doing 70 miles per hour. If you lost control it would take miles to stop. Anyway, I was very lucky, I just lifted the foot off the accelerator and was not game to touch the brakes. The road was good and straight, so I just let the car coast until it finally slowed down to a safe speed. Another hard lesson, no dust means a wet road.

Another road issue was floods. Even though there had been no rain in the Goondiwindi area all that really needed to happen was an inch or two in the catchment of the river 100-200 km away and the water would find its way down the streams, sometimes two weeks later, with perfectly clear blue skies and raging torrents in all the creeks and rivers. The flooding occurred so long after rain that happened miles away, that you often forgot that there could be a flood coming. On one occasion I had to visit a client to insure his new harvester. If I wanted him to sign the paperwork, I had to find him in his back paddock, because he was using the harvester to get in his crop.

He gave me directions and said when you get near the paddock there's a creek crossing, be very careful when you approach it because there's a flood coming, very hard to believe because I didn't know there was rain anywhere recently.

Anyway, it was bone dry, so we had a yarn, did the paperwork and I bid him farewell. He said, when you get back to that creek it could be flooded. I'll believe that when I get back to the creek. Sure enough, there was 2 m of water boring down and the crossover had to be made on his stock bridge which was 100 m away. When I was faced with this prospect and I looked at the bridge I nearly died. It was made from old tree stumps with branches across it and tied up with rope. I had to drive my Falcon across there. It was quite a frightening experience, but I did get across and I didn't drown.



There was a shallow swamp on the edge of Thallon and when the floods came through the road was blocked. Sometimes I arrived to find the road under a hundred metres of water. What the locals did to circumvent this was to drive up onto the railway tracks, drive across the railway bridge to the other side, and then back onto the road. It was a fairly precarious thing to do and you've only got an inch or two on either side of the wheels on the railway sleepers. The car bounced a lot so I had to drive very carefully. I often wondered what would happen if a train came along.

On my way back from Toowoomba there was a dual creek crossing near Inglewood. I got caught out in a big storm on a Friday night. I really wanted to get home, so I pressed on. The first creek was running fast, so I took my shoes off and found it was only about 10 inches deep. I figured it was safe to drive through, however, stupidly I walked down the middle of the track where there was a hump but where the wheels went there was two big hollows. To my surprise water ran up the bonnet and flew off the windscreen. I managed to stagger out on about two cylinders. I was now stuck between two creeks, when a really large semi-trailer came along. The driver asked me if I had a problem? I said, I wanted to get to Goondiwindi and I'm stuck between these two creeks. We checked the next creek and it was about the same depth as the first so he said, don't worry, I'll put a chain on the back of the trailer and attach it to your car so you are only a metre or so behind me. I'll go through fairly steadily and that way you won't wet your engine but you might get a bit of water in your car, however you'll get through. Sure enough we did, but halfway across the car started to float sideways and I'm ready to bail out when it hit dry land. I had to get all the water out of the car so I could drive home.

At one time there was a particularly large flood coming down the Macintyre River and it spread over the banks in certain areas. One of my better clients rang Dalgety's and said they had some cattle on the riverbank, and he was worried about them. Could they go and check on the cattle to make sure that they were still okay. Friend Bob borrowed an aluminium dinghy and I went off to help him unload it at a floodway. The water was flowing quite quickly and I wasn't inclined to get in the boat. It would have been overloaded. I said to him, you row off and find the cattle and I'll wait here with the car. The River's rising anyway and I might have to shift it. He disappeared behind some trees and I was staring into space when all of a sudden I realised that there was a 2 m angry brown snake that had swum out of the flood and was heading for me at full speed. I reckon I achieved a world record for backward broad jumping. I did not touch the ground for a least 5 m. I reckon I scared the snake and it went off at right angles and under some tin. I spent the rest of the time waiting for my friend with one eye on this pile of tin, just in case the snake came out again. I was very shaken by the experience. It was a really angry brown snake.



Floods in the town of Goondiwindi were a bit of a social event because the town had a levee bank right along the river edge to keep the floodwaters out of the town proper. It was the customary thing to build little dams around all the drains in the main street so that the water that backed up didn't flood the town. It was a lot of fun for the town folk to drive down to the bridge every hour to check on the level of the floods. Obviously, everyone was worried that if it was going to be a record it was going to breach the Levee Banks. It never happened while I was there, the highest the river ever got was within 6 inches of the top of the Levee, so everybody lived to see another day.

A story that created a lot of excitement in Goondiwindi was about a racehorse called Gunsynd. The horse was owned by a local syndicate, who, in search of a name for the beast decided on Gunsynd.



At the time Gunsynd came to prominence I had left the town on transfer to Toowoomba. He was so successful on the racetrack that I followed him and made a few dollars on the TAB, at very short odds. The horse became such a legend in town that they had a window at the TAB for Gunsynd bets only, and there would be a long queue down the street of people waiting to place a bet. There is a statue of the horse on the riverbank in Goondiwindi, a testament to his popularity and success.

The owners did quite well out of the experience and I knew them all, some better than others. They were a motley crew but had one thing in common, they were all big punters. The one I knew least was Jaybo Coorey, a draper. He was a big man; I think a Lebanese gentleman. The drapery shop I can remember had the old overhead wires to deal with the cash. It sent these little containers along a wire to a central cashier, a very old but very common system in those days. Eventually, electronics were introduced.

Another owner, Bill Bishop, was a very affable guy and always cheerful. I can remember going back to Goondiwindi some 25 years later to his Newsagency on a Sunday morning and he said *good day, how are you, haven't seen you lately, where have you been?* Geez Bill, it's 25 years since I was here last, to which he responded *is it that long? oh well welcome back.*

Another owner George Pippas was a hotelier, very dapper single Greek gentleman. His parents owned the Australian Hotel in Goondiwindi for some years. When they decided to retire and sell, George and his little brother Lucky decided to buy the Victoria Hotel and stay in Goondiwindi. The Victoria Hotel was notorious for having extremely attractive young ladies as barmaids and the word was that George and Lucky use to harass the girls a bit. The girls would generally leave after a while so the brothers would make a trip to Brisbane for another batch. This was a cue for the local lads to visit the hotel and check out the new girls. The girls never did stay too long so their treatment must have been poor. I remember seeing George in Brisbane many years later at Gambaros restaurant with two beautiful women, he hadn't changed his ways. I believe he died at a young age from a heart attack, I wonder why.



The other owner was Winks McMicking a grazier. He obviously had a good eye for horse flesh. He was the one that purchased Gunsynd at the yearling sales on the Gold Coast for a very small amount of money. Winks used to like his grog and spent a lot of time in town. He had share farmers growing wheat on his property, so I suppose he didn't really have to work all that hard. He made it known that it was okay for the young fellows at Dalgety's to go out to his property and shoot pigs because the pigs were a particular problem, eating the wheat. At one stage a rep from Brisbane visited town and he said he wanted to shoot some pigs and that he had brought a big 303 carbine for that purpose. I agreed to take him out to Wink's place one evening. There was a good spot right up the back of his property away from everything. We had to go through three or four gates to get to this paddock and I clearly remember each gate post was a hollow log and a bottle of rum protruded from the top of each, obviously Wink's work day supplies as he travelled through the property.

The place we went shooting was a big thousand-acre paddock divided into four smaller paddocks. Where the fences crossed over in the centre there was a drinking trough so that animals could drink from each of the four paddocks in the one trough. Two of the paddocks were beautiful wheat crops, one was pulled timber, and the other was natural Scrub. The idea was to hide in the scrub until dusk when the pigs would come out of the pulled timber, where they like to sleep during the day, and have a drink at the trough. At this point everyone would ready aim and fire.

On this particular day I asked my wife if she'd like to come, which she agreed, and when we were waiting for the pigs I advised her that if by some chance we were to wound a pig and make it angry, she should climb a particular nearby tree. That didn't please her one little bit. However, as we were sitting quietly waiting, we heard pig noises.



Suddenly, we thought, here they come get ready. The noises got louder but there was no sign of the pigs, then we realised the noise was coming from behind us so we turned around to see this massive mother pig with two piglets. I had a tiny little .22 rifle which was useless but my mate with his big cannon fired and blew a big hole in the mother Pig. At this point my wife was halfway up the tree. All the other pigs disappeared and that was the end of the shooting for the day. We decided that we would catch one of the piglets and take it back to town. When we got back it dawned

on me that I didn't have the facilities to fatten it, so as a joke we decided to put it in a box and take it down the street to my friend Bob's place. We snuck into his house and put it on his kitchen table then snuck back home and rang him up. He was not pleased to be woken. We said, look what's on your kitchen table. He came back to us ranting about this dirty pig, covered in lice and fleas, in his house and hung up in our ear. Months later he told me that the pig tasted very nice. He had taken it to his brother-in-law who had a pen to house it, and they eventually slaughtered it but I didn't receive a share, obviously I was not forgiven.

Country towns like Goondiwindi tend to attract quite a few characters.

One that comes to mind is George the dentist. He referred to himself as the local fang farrier, which inferred that he was a veterinary dentist, rather than a human one, but he was a lovely bloke.

Another guy, Doug, was the shire engineer. He was very dry and not at all a happy chappy. He was a wartime Spitfire pilot and was enlisted to help build the gliding strip. He did so by ordering the local grader driver to quietly enter the property where we flew and spent all day making this beautiful long flat strip, free of charge. He was a wonderful pilot and became an instructor, although a cranky one.

Tom was a stock and station agent with an outstanding ability to mimic Al Jolson. He was amazing and often did singalongs painted black, which of course is taboo today. Of all things, he eventually became the Mayor of Goondiwindi.

There was another guy called Glen, manager of Primaries and a very funny bloke. He was also a bad diabetic. I remember going to visit a new client with him on a property and we were offered a beer. We had a few, and I was thinking to myself, he should not be drinking beer. When we said goodbye to the client and were driving out to the first gate, I got out to open it and Glen said you better drive, I'm about to pass out. I drove at a million miles an hour and took him to his wife who was very annoyed. He spent two days in hospital recovering. He certainly went to great lengths to look after a new customer.

Another guy, called Bevan, was a real ocker pastoral agent. It was said he had a secret Opal mine near Thallon. This area was the same type of country as Lightning Ridge, in fact I think it was an extension of Lightning Ridge and nobody doubted that he had a mine, but he never ever produced any opals to show.



My neighbour was called “Loppy” by all and sundry because he had a very narrow head and very prominent ears. He was a pretty harmless guy, loved fishing and loved drinking even more. He came home after closing time one night to his lovely placid wife (I thought she was). Loppy obviously thought he would be in trouble so he bought along two young backpacker barmaids promising them that his wife would cook them dinner. I found out that his wife was not a very nice quiet person. She went off the deep end and abused them all and started throwing saucepans at Loppy. The girls ran away and I think Loppy spent the night in his car. He had a small fibreglass dinghy, and being resourceful, filled it full of water and put his live carp bait in the dinghy for the next fishing trip. My cat discovered the carp and spent many hours trying to fish them out. Loppy, of course, spent many hours throwing empty beer cans, and whatever else he could get his hands on, at my cat but he never really succeeded in stopping it trying to catch his fish. One morning when I was in my yard Loppy called across the fence, *Hey mate you better close your windows I'm about to mow the grass*. His version of mowing the grass was to set fire to it every 6 months. I rushed to close the windows and I have this image of Loppy with cigarette in mouth, stubby in one hand, hose in the other, watching that his house didn't burn down.



One of the unique experiences of country life was using the party telephone lines and manual exchanges. They were quite fun, when you rang a party line everyone on the line picked up, even if it was not their call sign, and it was funny to hear all the clicks when they found out that the call was not interesting. If it was interesting you could sometimes hear people breathing or chatting on the other end, that was what you had to put up with. On some properties the telephone lines were the top wire of the dividing fences, but this always seemed to work.

After a four-year posting in Goondiwindi I was sent to the Toowoomba office as senior Clerk. This was supposedly a promotion. I received a small salary increase but my wife was pregnant, and we only had one income. I also lost the use of the company car and expense account, so it was not a great time, and we were very poor for the first time in our married life. Both our kids, David and Lisa, were born in Toowoomba which were special life events. After four years in Toowoomba my hard work did eventually lead to our transfer to Brisbane in 1974. From there I had good career advancement through IT, Systems and Administration, then back to insurance, culminating in my retirement as Rural Division Manager for Queensland in 1994.

I was too young not to work, so I did some contract projects with an insurance broker. I also started a new insurance agency business for a group of AMP life agents.

After a couple of years I joined the staff of the YMCA as State Development officer. My association with the YMCA was as a member of the board of directors and president, for many years. I decided it would be a challenge starting new YMCAs so I joined their staff and we created new centres at Cairns, Townsville, and Springfield. I was also supporting smaller country YMCAs at Stanthorpe, Murgon, Gayndah, and Bundaberg. This was a very enjoyable four years, working with the YMCA creating new small businesses, and totally different to my entire insurance career with the exception that I was used to travelling all over the state for work.

The YMCA has for many years owned a share in Southside Bingo and I became involved in that business in order to protect the YMCA's interests. This led me to being president of Southside Bingo for 15 years and the inaugural President of Southside Sports and Community Club, now known as Club Southside. In order to cope with the workload, I resigned the presidency to become vice president of the club for 10 years. I decided that at age 70 it was time to retire completely from both bingo and the club.

The Southside Club at one point agreed to sponsor the formation of a Men's Shed at Mount Gravatt, and I took on the role of Club liaison with the formation committee. This led to me becoming a foundation member (number 38) and also. enabled me to secure substantial funding by way of grants from the club.

My involvement with the Men's Shed is ongoing and I am enjoying every minute of retirement, although I no longer have my love, my companion, my wife Glenice, she passed away in 2017.

Sad, but life goes on.



THE SCHNEIDEWIN FAMILY
50th Wedding Anniversary